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Rajasthan Section

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Formerly named the Madhya Bharat Section, the Rajasthan Section is a part of the Northern India Union Section in the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters is in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Territory and Statistics

The Rajasthan Section's territory is comprised of the districts of Ajmer, Alwar, Banswara, Barmer, Baran, Bikaner, Bhilwara, Bharatpur, Bundi, Churu, Chhitaurgarh, Dausa, Dhaulpur, Dungarpur, Hanumangarh, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Jhalawar, Jhunjhunu, Jodhpur, Karauli, Kota, Nagaur, Rajasmand, Pali, Pratapgarh, Sawai Madhopur, Sikar, Sirohi, Sriganganagar, Tonk, and Udaipur in the state of Rajasthan. As of June 30, 2020, the section included fifty churches with a membership of 6,729. Its population was 78,053,895.

Early History

Colporteur A. W. Caratt reported in 1911 that when he went to Jodhpur, he met a person who was already in possession of Adventist books and a subscriber to the *Oriental Watchman*. In Ajmer he also found Spirit of Prophecy books in the homes of some of the people.¹

Students from Jodhpur served as Sabbath School and youth department officers at Vincent Hill School in the 1920s. Among them were Katy (Katie) Kothawala,² and Ivy, Grace, and Ida Maseyk.³ Fred Maseyk, foreman of the publishing house in 1928, was also from Jodhpur.⁴

Jodhpur

The Voice of Prophecy (VOP) radio broadcast and its Bible correspondence courses generated significant interest. In 1956 after a major VOP rally in Jodhpur, several people begged for a pastor to be stationed there.⁵ In response, Edward F. Gardner was relocated to 10 Sardarpur in Jodhpur and began public meetings.⁶ In 1957, Inayat Masih Chand conducted a series of meetings in Jodhpur, assisted by Barkat Masih Isaac, mission president Ted Torkelson, and local pastor E. F. Gardner.⁷ The meetings were followed by seventeen baptisms.⁸ The Jodhpur church was organized on August 30, 1958, with eighteen charter members. Apart from the Gardners, all had joined the church during the eighteen months of evangelism.⁹

Among the first to be baptized was the Jagendra Singh family. Bharat, the eldest son, recalls that as youngsters they accompanied a neighbor's children to Sabbath School programs held at the home of E. F. Gardner. Soon his parents became curious and eventually they all joined the company preparing for baptism.

Jaipur

In the 1960s, the Jagendra Singh family relocated to Jaipur and started a school, promising to pay an honest tithe.¹⁰ By 1969, the school had three hundred children and thirteen teachers. The school was an effective witness and the Jaipur church was organized on April 14-15, 1972, when the Johnson Hall was opened and dedicated with twenty-one members. The weekend celebration included a baby dedication and a baptismal service. Jagendra Singh was elected a church elder and ordained during the course of the weekend. The dedication was conducted by James Campbell, and S. M. Moses from the Northwestern India Union office and officers from the Central India Section office. Daniel Jacob from Jodhpur and E. F. Gardner from Ajmer attended the services.¹¹

Ajmer

Miss Sandberg reported visiting some isolated Sabbath School members in Ajmer in 1937.¹² The Voice of Prophecy had created openings, and P. K. Simpson reported in 1948 that people in Ajmer were clamoring for a rally.¹³ This was held in 1952 when Pastor Rawson, T. R. Torkelson, and P. E. Howard conducted an effort attended by five hundred the first night and eight hundred the second.¹⁴ However, the process of establishing a church began when E. F. Gardner was stationed in Ajmer. Two people were baptized in 1970.¹⁵

In the summer of 1973, Northern Union President Gerald J. Christo conducted the city's first major series of meetings assisted by P. G. Mathews, B. T. Jacob, and Gordon Christo, who led the singing and was left behind in Ajmer to assist Gardner. Following the series, weekend services continued in a rented home on Ramble Road.¹⁶ Property for a church was purchased in 1975 when B. T. Jacob was pastor, and the foundation stone was laid on June 26, 1977.¹⁷ The Ajmer church was organized on October 5, 1977, by K. S. Kongari, P. E. Howard, Daniel Jacob, and E. F. Gardner.¹⁸

The Sri Ganganagar church was organized on September 11, 1982, by B. Luikham, L. D. Paul, and Ulfat Masih. Representatives attended from Ajmer and Jaipur. The Khan Mein church was organized on September 18, 1982, by R. D. Riches. Visitors from Jaipur and Bhilwara joined them.¹⁹

Organizational History

Initially, central India and the central provinces were part of the Northwestern Union and existed as an unorganized mission.²⁰ In the 1930s and 1940s, the Central Provinces Mission Station was part of the Western India Union.²¹

In 1952, the Northwest India and Western India Unions were combined into the Northwestern India Union.²² The Central Provinces Mission territory was combined with Bombay and North Maharashtra into a West Central Mission.

In 1968 in a significant move, executive officers were elected for the Central India Section and the headquarters moved away from the union office to Indore.²³ In 1970, Rajasthan was added to the mission territory and the headquarters moved to Bhopal.²⁴

In 1972, the state of Madhya Pradesh was split between the Northern Union and the Central India Union, and the Central India Section was dismantled. Rajasthan was mentioned only in the Northern Union's territory and not assigned to any section.²⁵

In 1976, the Madhya Bharat Region was formed by amalgamating the territories of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.²⁶ The next year the headquarters was shifted to Jaipur.²⁷ For a few years in the 1980s, Rajasthan was not shown in the Adventist yearbooks as part of the Madhya Bharat Region, but that is an error. The headquarters continued to be in Jaipur, Rajasthan, throughout those years, although the region was administered from the union office in New Delhi.

In 1982, an important step was taken to upgrade the Madhya Bharat Region when it was given a local officer. L. D. Paul, the pastor in Jaipur, was made region secretary. In 1983, the five districts of Madhya Bharat in the Central India Union were transferred to the Madhya Bharat Region in the Northern Union in exchange for the districts in Orissa that moved from the Northern Union to the Central India Union.²⁸ In 1984, the region was upgraded to section level, and L. D. Paul was elected president. The headquarters of Madhya Bharat Section was unanimously voted to be in Bhopal.²⁹

In 2016, the Southern Asia Division approved the formation of the Madhya Pradesh Region.³⁰ The State of Rajasthan was organized into a separate Rajasthan Section with fifty churches.

Administrators

Madhya Bharat Section Presidents

W. H. Mattison (1977-1979), Robin D. Riches (1979-1984), L. D. Paul (1984-1985), Peter Mundu (1985-1987), Victor K. Singh (1987-1991), S. R. Gill (1991-1997), M. G. Kisku (1997-1998), P. K. Gayen (1998-2000), Hidayat Masih (2002-2005), Ravi Masih Gill (2006-2016), P. M. Lall (2016-2017).³¹

Rajasthan Section Administrators

President: P. M. Lall (2018-).

Secretary-Treasurer: Harun Lakra (2018-).

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